Effectiveness and Outcomes of WBI Activities: Results from 12 Focus Countries

The Challenge
Sustainable development requires capacity building at individual, organizational, and societal levels. The World Bank Institute (WBI) supports World Bank operations by providing learning activities, advisory services, and knowledge products that support efforts of client countries to achieve such development. To increase the relevance, effectiveness, and usefulness of WBI's learning products, WBI launched a new country-focused approach in FY02 to develop and enhance capacity in client countries. This approach tailors WBI activities to the needs and challenges of each country and aligns these activities with the World Bank's country assistance strategies and clients' development goals.

The Response
To take the country-focused initiative forward, WBI collaborated with the World Bank's regional teams to identify 33 focus countries in which to channel country-focused services. The report summarized in this brief provides a baseline for evaluating the effectiveness and outcomes of WBI activities in 12 of these countries. Outcomes are defined as participants' use of skills and knowledge obtained at WBI activities.

Participants and Response Rates
To assess effectiveness and outcomes, the Institute Evaluation Group (IEG) surveyed participants in Brazil, Egypt, Russia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand in FY03 who had attended WBI activities of

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Figure 1: Two-Level Model Predicting Activity Effectiveness and Use of Knowledge and Skills

Independent Variables
- Participant Characteristics
  - Gender
  - Job level
  - Language proficiency
- WBI Policy Variables
  - Action plans
  - Delivery mode
  - WBI thematic group
- Exogenous Factors
  - GNI per capita
  - Time of delivery

Activity Effectiveness
- Raising awareness
- Building new knowledge and skills
- Providing strategies and approaches

Utilization of Knowledge and Skills
- Academic use: research, teaching, raising awareness
- Operational use: implement practices, develop strategies, influence legislation, organize initiatives

Facilitators and Barriers
- Organizational Factors
- Country level factors

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more than one day's duration in either FY01 or FY02. Likewise, IEG surveyed participants in Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Tajikistan, and Yemen in FY04 who had attended WBI activities of more than one day's duration in either FY02 or FY03. Qualitative information gathered from focus group discussions with participants in selected activities supplemented the quantitative data.

The surveys, which employed a common questionnaire with translation and pretesting in each country, involved either the full population or a random sample of 18 to 35 percent of the participants in each of the countries.

Seventy-nine percent of the sampled participants were eligible to be surveyed, based on some form of contact information recorded. Due to inaccurate or outdated contact information, about 72 percent of eligible participants were reachable. The adjusted response rate varied from 42 percent in Nigeria to 92 percent in Kenya. Sixty-one percent of respondents were male, and 57 percent held either a midlevel or senior-level position in their organization.

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**Evaluation Methods and Instruments**

The evaluation used a two-stage least-squares regression analysis model (see Figure 1). The first-stage regression examined the influence of participants' characteristics, activity features, country income, and time of delivery on participants' ratings of effectiveness. The analysis disaggregated effectiveness into three components: (a) effectiveness in raising awareness and understanding of country development issues; (b) effectiveness in building new knowledge and skills; and (c) effectiveness in providing strategies and approaches for addressing organizational or country needs. Overall effectiveness is a simple average of these components.

The second-stage regression examined the influence of overall effectiveness from the first stage as well as participants' characteristics, activity features, facilitators and barriers, and gross national income (GNI) per capita on participants' ratings of their use of the knowledge and skills acquired during WBI activities. The study defines two components of participants' use, academic use and operational use, with

**Figure 2: Ratings on Overall Effectiveness and Overall Use, by Country Gross National Income Per Capita**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 country average</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The 12 country average is unweighted.

2. The World Bank's fiscal year (FY) begins on July 1 and ends on June 30. FY03 began on July 1, 2002.
3. In total, 1,382 participants responded to surveys for these country-focused evaluations. The participant population for activities lasting longer than one day in these countries was 13,882.
overall use as the simple average of these two components.

Evaluation Results

1. Development of action plans during WBI activities increases participants’ ratings of effectiveness.

The average overall effectiveness rating in the 12 countries was 5.1 (ratings are from 1 = “not effective at all” to 7 = “extremely effective”). The development of action plans in a WBI activity boosted perceived effectiveness by 13 percent. Such plans include work plans, strategy papers, policy documents, assessments of country needs, or assessments of sectoral needs.

2. Effectiveness is higher in lower-income countries than in lower-middle-income countries.

Participants from lower-income countries rate effectiveness significantly higher than participants from lower-middle-income countries do, controlling for participant characteristics, WBI activity features, and exogenous factors including the time of activity delivery. This finding holds for all measures of effectiveness (see Figure 2).

3. Use of knowledge and skills acquired is higher for participants in lower-income countries than for participants in lower-middle-income countries.

More than just indirectly through overall effectiveness, GNI per capita has a direct, negative, and significant effect on overall use. Participants from the poorest countries appear to benefit more from WBI activities than do participants from richer countries (see Figure 2).

4. More recent WBI activities are more effective than activities conducted in earlier years.

In addition to the GNI-per-capita (or income) effect, the evaluation found an independent time of activity delivery effect. Activities delivered during the last six-month period, from January to June 2003, were significantly more effective than those delivered in the first six-month period, from July to December 2000 (see Figure 3).

5. Participant surveys asked about three components of activity effectiveness (see Figure 1). Among these three, the increase in participant ratings over time is largest for the survey question that asked about the activity’s effectiveness in providing strategies and approaches for development. The increase in effectiveness in building knowledge and skills is also significant.

Although WBI activities receive the highest effectiveness ratings in the area of raising awareness, the effect of time of activity delivery on effectiveness ratings is especially strong for effectiveness in providing strategies and approaches.

6. Participants with good proficiency in the primary language used during the activity and in the technical terminology of the subject matter report the highest effectiveness ratings.

Relatively few participants lacked suitable language skills, and most were already proficient in both the language of instruction and in the technical terminology of the activity (means of 6.0 and 5.7, respectively, on a 7-point rating scale). Nonetheless, participants in focus

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Figure 3: Ratings on Overall Use and Overall Effectiveness, by Date of WBI Activity Delivery

![Figure 3: Ratings on Overall Use and Overall Effectiveness, by Date of WBI Activity Delivery](image-url)
group discussions in some lower-income countries expressed the need for activities to be held in-country and in their own languages.

7. Activity effectiveness increases participants’ use of the knowledge and skills they acquire from WBI learning activities.

The average overall use of knowledge and skills rating in the 12 countries was 4.4 on a 7-point scale (ratings of use of knowledge and skills range from 1 = “not at all” to 7 = “very often”). The most significant factor explaining use is overall effectiveness. A 10-percent improvement in participants’ ratings of overall effectiveness increased by 9 percent the frequency with which they used the knowledge and skills acquired during the WBI activity.

8. Participants in high-level positions make more frequent use of the knowledge and skills they acquire from WBI activities than do participants in lower-level positions.

This finding is particularly noteworthy for operational use, which involves implementing practices, developing strategies, influencing legislation, and organizing initiatives.

**Implications and Conclusions**

Key findings related to WBI activity effectiveness include:

- Development of action plans during the activity increases effectiveness, but the share of participants reporting that they prepared action plans was low. Although the share of participants preparing action plans increased to more than 40 percent in FY02 and FY03 from 17 percent in the first half of FY01, there is much WBI can do to ensure that action plans are developed in most or all activities.

- Effectiveness and frequency of use of knowledge and skills are typically highest in poorer countries. This result suggests that the relevance of the content of WBI activities should be improved for lower-middle income countries.

- The increase in participant ratings of WBI effectiveness over time was largest in the area of strategies and approaches for development. This result indicates that WBI has shifted its strategy from an emphasis mostly on awareness raising to an approach that adds a focus on strategies and approaches for development.

The report makes three main recommendations:

- Continue with the action-planning approach, especially if the objective is to help participants apply WBI-acquired knowledge and skills to development. For task managers unfamiliar with this approach, it may be useful to organize a workshop featuring experienced task managers who can share their techniques and lessons learned.

- Review the activity content and approach to activity implementation in middle-income countries to assess whether changes are warranted.

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**About WBI**

The World Bank Institute (WBI) helps people, institutions, and countries to diagnose problems that keep communities poor; to make informed choices to solve those problems; and to share what they learn with others. Through traditional and distance learning methods, WBI and its partners in many countries deliver knowledge-based options to policy makers, technical experts, business and community leaders, and civil society stakeholders, fostering analytical and networking skills to help them make sound decisions, design effective socioeconomic policies and programs, and harness the productive potential of their societies.

The Institute Evaluation Group (IEG) works with WBI’s Leadership Team and with the World Bank’s Learning Board to design, implement, and report evaluation results for staff, client, and joint learning events. IEG also offers distance learning and face-to-face training in program evaluation. WBI Evaluation Briefs report on these evaluation results.

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**An Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Outcomes of WBI FY01-03 Activities: Results from 12 Priority Countries**

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